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Public Confidence in Organized Religion Continues to Decline

PRINCETON, N.J. — Public confidence in organized religion continues to decline, with the proportion saying they have a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in this institution down a total of 12 points since July 1985.

Factors that have contributed to this slide may have been growing discomfort on the part of some over the relationship between church and — more specifically, religion and politics — and more recently, over statements made by Oral Roberts, as well as the Jim and Tammy Bakker situation.

For the first time in over a decade, the church or organized religion has lost its clear primacy as the institution in which the American people have the greatest confidence. (Confidence in organized religion has been compared to confidence in 9 other institutions in regular surveys since 1973. In the latest survey, a total of 4 institutions were rated.) Statistically as many people now say they have a high level of confidence in the military as say this about organized religion.

Here is the question:

I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Would you please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one — a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little?

Here are the findings on the church or organized religion:

Confidence in Church or Organized Religion

Great deal	32%
Quite a lot	22
Some	22
Very little	18
None (Volunteered)	3
Don't know	3
	100%

And here is the long-term trend in the ratings given the church or organized religion, and a comparison with ratings given other key institutions in American society:

Confidence in Institutions
(Percent saying "great deal" or "quite a lot")

	1987	1986	1985	1983	1979	1973
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Church or organized religion	54	57	66	62	65	66
Military	53	63	61	53	54	*
Banks	51	49	51	51	60	*
Public schools	47	49	48	39	53	58

*Not asked.

The findings reported today are based on a telephone survey of 513 adults, 18 and older, interviewed during the period March 30 to April 15.

Homosexuals in Clergy Grows

by Kenneth Briggs

Though actions and statements against homosexuality have been undertaken by several religious groups, results from recent Gallup surveys reveal growing acceptance of homosexuals in the ranks of the clergy by the general public.

In 1977, 36 percent of the public said that homosexuals should be welcomed as members of the clergy. Since then, the figure has slowly climbed to a new high of 42 percent in 1987. Fifty-one percent in the latest survey said gays should not be included. The latest survey was conducted by telephone March 14-18 with 1,015 adults, 18 and older.

No major religious group has sanctioned the ordination of practicing homosexuals, though many, including the Roman Catholic Church, have stated that celibate homosexuals are eligible. The Vatican issued a document on homosexuality last Fall which referred to the condition as "disordered" and has stirred controversy in several areas of the country by banning a group called *Dignity* that has ministered to homosexuals for several years. The reason cited for the ban is the claim that *Dignity* condones homosexual activity. Reports of priests dying from AIDS and claims of large numbers of homosexuals in the priesthood have further inflamed the debate.

Support for Legalization of Homosexual Relations Declines 10 Points

The trend over the past decade has been in the direction of denying legalization of homosexual relations. In 1977, 43 percent of the public thought such relations should be legalized. That figure has dropped a full ten points by this year. The percentage believing homosexual relations should not be legalized has risen from 43 percent to 55 percent in the same period.

In light of these findings, and the recent actions of the Catholic church, it is interesting to note that Catholics are more in favor of permitting homosexual relations than Protestants, by a 36% to 29% margin, slightly above the overall figure of 33 percent.

Southwest Wins On Religiosity Scale

The level of religious involvement (or religiosity) is highest in the Southwest section of the nation, which includes Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas.

The Southwest is followed by the West Central region of the nation (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin), the Southeast (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia,) the Rocky Mountain region (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming), and the East Central states (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio).

Next are the Mid-Atlantic states (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and West Virginia), followed by New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont), and at the bottom, the Pacific region, which includes Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington.

Levels Based on 3 Questions

Religiosity levels are determined by adding the percentages in each region who are church members, attended church in a 7-day test period, and say religion is "very important" in their lives, and then dividing by three (the number of questions used to determine the levels).

Following, in descending order, are the levels for each of the 8 regions, based on a massive sampling taken in 1986:

Religiosity Levels

1.	Southwest	63%
2.	West Central	60
3.	Southeast	59
4.	Rocky Mountain	55
5.	East Central	54
6.	Mid-Atlantic	53
7.	New England	48
8.	Pacific	44

Many Teens Favor Ban on Tobacco and X-Rated Films

About half of America's teens support a national ban on the sale of tobacco and the showing of X-rated films, according to the results of the latest Gallup Youth Survey.

However, fewer than one-third of the surveyed teens favor a similar ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages.

Forty-nine percent of the teens say they would favor a federal law that would ban all tobacco sales. Opposed are 47 percent, while 4 percent are undecided. This represents a seven percentage-point increase in those favoring a ban of tobacco products since 1984, when 42 percent of the teens favored the proposal.

Young men (48 percent) and young women (49 percent) are united in their opposition to tobacco sales. Midwestern teens (54 percent) give majority support to a tobacco ban, but elsewhere only 46 percent of the teens support it.

A majority of above-average students (53 percent) say they would favor a national tobacco ban, compared with only 42 percent of those who say their academic work is average or below-average.

Support for banning all X-rated movies has grown, from 35 percent of all teens in 1984 to a majority of 52 percent in 1986. Opposing any censorship of "X" material are 43 percent of the teens, while 5 percent are undecided.

Young women (57 percent) are more likely than young men (47 percent) to call for the prohibition of the showing of X-rated movies. Above-average students (55 percent) more often than academic underachievers (47 percent) support a ban on X-rated films.

Regionally, greatest support for a national ban on X-rated movies is found in the West (57 percent), while least support occurs in the East (48 percent). A majority of the teens residing in the Midwest (52 percent) and South (51 percent) would like to see a nationwide ban of X-rated movies.

Only three teens in 10 (31 percent) say they would like to see the sale of beer, wine, and liquor banned throughout the nation. Opposed to a return of the prohibition of alcohol sales are 63 percent of the teens; 6 percent are undecided.

Young men (34 percent) are slightly more likely than young women (29 percent) to want prohibition of alcoholic beverage sales. Sentiment for prohibition is stronger among teens who are 13 to 15 (36 percent) than among those who are 16 or older (26 percent).

Greatest support for the prohibition of alcoholic beverage sales is found in the South (38 percent), while the least support comes from the West (25 percent).

Here is how the proposals were tested:

Would you favor or oppose a law forbidding the sale of all beer, wine, and liquor throughout the nation? . . . the sale of all tobacco throughout the nation? . . . the showing of all X-rated movies throughout the nation?

The findings reported today are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 528 teen-agers, 13 through 17, conducted from October through December 1986.

Teen Support for Prohibitions

	Favor National Ban of:		
	Tobacco	Alcohol	X-rated movies
NATIONAL	49%	31%	52%
Male	48	34	47
Female	49	29	57
Ages 13 to 15	49	36	52
Ages 16 to 17	49	26	51
Above-average students	53	31	55
Average and below	42	32	47
East	47	30	48
Midwest	54	31	52
South	46	38	51
West	46	25	57

What Adults Want to Know About Teens

Almost every day reporters, educators and youth workers ask Gallup Youth Survey researchers questions about the current teen generation. Here are the answers to some of the most commonly asked questions:

Q: What are kids like today?
A: First of all, don't call them kids, children, or boys and girls. Much is expected of them, and so they prefer to be called teen-agers, teens, students, or young men and women.

Q: OK, but does that also mean they want to grow up to be yuppies?
A: Yuppies are "young urban professionals." Teens, of course, are young, and most expect to be employed as professionals or white-collar workers. But many prefer to live in the suburbs, small towns and rural areas.

Q: But the term "yuppie" can also be used to describe people who are materialistic, self-indulgent and overly dependent upon technological gadgets.
A: Teens are quite at home with computers, VCRs, microwave ovens and other high-tech devices, but there is no evidence to suggest they are materialistic and narcissistic.

Q: Is this another "do nothing" generation?
A: Most teens would like to become involved in such issues as achieving peace, better government, a cleaner environment and improved racial harmony. Most young men and women say they would be willing to give a year of their lives to national service. If teens do nothing, it may be because we haven't asked anything of them.

Q: Then why don't we see teens demonstrating anymore?
A: They take the issues of past causes for granted now. To give some examples: Most would be willing to vote for a woman for president. The majority would approve of interracial marriages. Most take a tough stand on environmental issues.

Q: Do teens oppose the draft?
A: The majority don't like the idea of a military draft, but most young men and many young women are willing to register if needed.

Q: Are teens influenced by the threat of nuclear war?
A: A majority of teens see some possibility of a nuclear war occurring during their lifetimes, and one teen in four says this possibility has had a serious influence upon how he is planning for the future. Few teens see much chance surviving as an individual or a nation in a nuclear war.

Q: Do they believe we should be doing more to prevent nuclear war?
A: Four teens in ten would like to see the United States do more to keep world peace. Most teens are skeptical about Soviet peace intentions, with 44 percent believing the Soviet Union would be the most likely aggressor in a nuclear war.

Q: What are teens most concerned about?
A: Increasingly, they name drug and alcohol abuse as the greatest problems facing their generation.

Q: Don't most teens experiment with drugs?
A: Many undoubtedly have tried drugs at least once, but the trend among teens in recent years has been overwhelmingly against drugs. Fewer now use marijuana frequently, and most oppose its legalization or decriminalization.

Q: Has alcohol now become the drug of choice among teens?
A: There is no question that drinking among teens is a problem. Many teens admit to having driven under the influence. Fortunately, that figure is lower than was found in the past, and the majority of teens now approve raising the drinking age to 21 across the country.

Q: Is there much premarital sex among teens?
A: The statistics on pregnancies among unwed teens certainly offer proof that there is much premarital sex. Teens themselves report that partying, dating and going steady are their greatest peer pressures.

Q: Will there be a decline in traditional families and more divorces?
A: Maybe not. Teens say they want to see traditional family ties strengthened. Most want to be married some day, and most take a dim view of the laxity of our divorce laws. They want to work to make their marriages last.

Q: Do teens watch too much television?
A: Some probably do, especially movies on cable and the VCR. They have not stopped reading, however, and many are avid readers of newspapers, magazines and books.

Q: Don't they spend too much time indoors with television and computers?
A: Teens are far more likely than adults to report regular exercise through fitness programs or sports. Young women now match young men in participation in sports and fitness programs.

Q: What do teens most like to do for fun?
A: Sports are their favorite extracurricular activity, but outside of school they most enjoy visiting with friends, dating or dancing. Passive entertainment such as watching television or going to the movies take second place to these activities.

Q: Do teens also like to be with their parents?
A: Most say they get on well with their parents, although the relationships tend to be smoother with their mothers than with their fathers. They usually want fewer lectures from their parents about sex and drugs, but want more frank discussions about the family's financial situation.

Q: Why do you think they are so interested in the family's finances?
A: The majority of teens want to go to college and, as might be expected, look to mom and dad as their main source of financial support during those years.

Q: Why don't the teens go out and work? — look at all the "help wanted" signs!
A: Seven teens in 10 do have part-time jobs, earning an average of $48 a week. Most of the remaining teens work around the house to earn their allowances.

Q: Finally, is there a religious revival among teens?
A: Questions about religion and the need for spiritual guidance and belief have always been important to young people. Today's teen-agers probably show neither greater nor less interest in these matters.

Nearly Half of French People Call Themselves Non-Religious

by Kenneth Briggs

The French are far less likely than Americans to believe in God, describe Jesus Christ as the Son of God, or practice prayer, a recent Gallup Poll shows.

The survey was conducted for the Rev. Billy Graham on the eve of the evangelist's French crusade last September. Among the findings was that 85 percent of those surveyed were unfamiliar with Mr. Graham.

Overall, the results confirm the widespread image of the French as religious doubters and absentees from church pews. While 53 percent defined themselves as religious, 31 percent called themselves non-religious and another 13 percent answered "convinced atheist."

60% Believe in God

Sixty percent of the French said they believed in God, compared to a whopping 95 percent of Americans, and 44 percent of the French chose the term "Son of God" to describe Jesus Christ, 30 percentage points fewer than Americans asked to make a similar choice.

The two nationalities are more closely matched on the issue of prayer than in rates of churchgoing. Sixty-three percent of the French said they prayed or meditated "often" or "sometimes," about 25 percentage points lower than Americans responding to the question. But only 11 percent of the French reported attending church weekly, about one-fourth of the Americans who say they do. Forty-eight percent of the French say they never attend.

Wariness toward the institution of the church was also evident in responses to the question of where the French would turn in time of personal crisis. Just 7 percent said they would consult a priest. Three-quarters said they would talk with a friend or family member.

The American tendency to equate belief in God with a personal relationship with the Almighty is only dimly reflected in the French experience. While three of five French respondents say God exists, only 26 percent believe such a personal relationship is possible, compared to 61 percent who do not.

Among the other findings in the French survey: 45 percent said God could be found outside of religion (40 percent said it was not possible); nearly half said they had no Bible in the home or among family members; 22 percent agreed that "everything which is told" in the Gospels "is true," compared to 49 percent who considered them a "mixture of historical stories and parables"; 48 percent said they did not believe in sin and half said they believed in "something after death."

78% Felt "At Peace" With Selves

Seventy-eight percent of the French said they felt at peace with themselves and relatively few respondents placed any faith in astrology or tarot cards.

Where do the French draw their hope for the future? Above all, they trust the ability of science to conquer sickness and misery. Three quarters placed their confidence there. Next in rank, far behind that figure, were faith in mankind's ability to improve the quality of life, the ability of the French to understand other people and achieving the unification of Europe.

And sources of worry? The major categories were unemployment (66 percent), pollution (46 percent), loss of morality (35 percent) and the growing gap between rich and poor (39 percent).

Support for an Evangelical Candidate Declines Sharply

As shown in the following table, public opinion, which was generally supportive of evangelical candidates in 1980, has shown a sharp swing toward the negative, although a majority continues to say their vote would not be affected by a candidate's religious views.

Aside from how you feel about a presidential candidate in other respects, would you be more likely to vote for a candidate who considers himself a "born-again" evangelical Christian, less likely to do so, or wouldn't it make any difference either way?

Vote for Evangelical

	1987	1980
More likely	15%	19%
No difference	52	66
Less likely	29	9
No opinion	4	6
	100%	100%

Details of Survey

The latest results are based on in-person interviews with 1,571 adults, 18 and older, conducted in more than 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation during the period April 10-13. For results based on samples of this size, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects should not exceed 3 percentage points in either direction.

In addition to sampling error, the readers should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. *These statements conform to the standards of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.*

New Book — "The American Catholic People: Their Beliefs, Practices, and Values" — Paints Surprising Portrait of American Catholics

- Catholics said by a 3 to 1 margin that "divorced Catholics should be allowed to remain in the Church."
- Support for a married priesthood is quite strong among Catholics (who accept it by a 2-to-1 margin).
- While Catholics are "conservative" on some key social issues, they clearly come down on the "liberal" side of other key social issues — most notably women's rights, gun control, and civil rights for minorities and homosexuals.

These are among the provocative findings in *The American Catholic People*, written by George Gallup, Jr. and Jim Castelli and published by Doubleday. Drawn from The Gallup Organization's data base, the book provides eye-opening insights into the 28% of American adults who identify themselves as Catholics.

Who are the American Catholics? 29% are under the age of 30; 16% are Hispanic, while 3% are black and another 3% classify themselves as non-white. 68% are parents; three out of four live in urban areas; and 55% identify themselves as politically right-of-center.

Gallup and Castelli compare this growing and increasingly influential population to the Protestant majority on a number of vital issues. They find that Catholics are more liberal than Protestants in their stance on the cutting of the defense budget and on the allocation of funds for social programs. Catholics will also be a major force for reduced military spending, moderation in foreign policy, and progress in the control of nuclear arms.

The American Catholic People: Their Beliefs, Practices, and Values. George Gallup, Jr. & Jim Castelli. February 20, 1987. $15.95 (Hardcover). Doubleday and Company, Inc., 245 Park Ave., New York, NY 10167. Contact: Diane Speicher (212) 984-7096

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